

The Early Life of John Craig, Scottish Reformer 1512-1560

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John Craig's long and arduous life all but spanned the entire sixteenth century. Two contemporary writers have got the date of his death the same, though they differ as to how old at the time he was. John Johnston, Professor of Theology at St Andrews University and colleague of Andrew Melville, and who claimed that Craig was his professor at Aberdeen, records his death as being on 12th December 1600, his age, 89. This from Johnston's Latin poems in manuscript, housed in the National Library of Scotland. The translation reads,

John of the Rock or Craig,
First minister of Aberdeen,
Thereafter royal chaplain.
To whom in the name of the town council
And people of Aberdeen this tomb is inscribed—
Who was my former teacher (qui Doctor Quondam meus).
Died, 12th December 1600.
Aged 89 years.¹

On the other hand, Archbishop Spottiswoode, seventeenth century Church historian and son of the Reformer of the same name who had been Superintendent of the Lothians, states in volume III of his History that when he died, Craig was "in the eighty-eighth year of his age."² The year of his birth may well have been 1512, which seems a reasonable compromise to make.

On the following year, 9th September, occurred the disaster of Flodden field. Among the minor country gentlemen slain was John Craig's father, as was also the grandfather of historian Spottiswoode.³ We know nothing about Craig's ancestry except that it belonged to the House of Craigfintry, later called Craigston Castle which is still shown on maps. The estate lay

¹ *op. cit.*, pp. 28-30, NLS. MS. 19/3/24.

² *op. cit.*, p. 91, *et seq.*

³ Spottiswoode, II, p. 336.

some six miles north of Turriff and some forty miles from Aberdeen. A note about the area states that,

“Sir Thomas Urquhart, the author of the “Jewel”, was connected with the family of Craigston, and if he did not reside in the parish, seems to have taken an interest in it, for the inscription on the massive communion cups shows that they were the joint present from a Dr Guild, Sir Thomas Urquhart, and John Urquhart of Craighfintrie, the former name of Craigston.”¹

P. Tytler in his work *Sir Thomas Craig of Riccarton*, the feudalist lawyer who was Craig the Reformer’s nephew, mentions the Craigston connections of the family.² In 1576 their estates were owned by a certain William Craig who sold the Craighfintry lands to Sir Thomas Craig, “advocate”, who on 16th April of that year, “obtained a crown charter for it for his heirs male, whom failing, to his brothers John, James, Robert and Oliver . . .”³ The lawyer’s father had carried on business as a merchant in Edinburgh for many years.⁴ J. Baillie in his short Latin life of Craig the advocate, is evidently in error when he states that he received the earliest rudiments of his education under John Craig the Reformer—“Having been virtuously educated by the care of Mr John Craig, a great divine, and his near relation, and made more than ordinary progress in the learned languages and in philosophy, he went to France.” (See, Ridpath, *Preface to Scotland’s Sovereignty*, p. 28). Tytler’s comment on this is:

“A comparison of the dates will convince us that John Craig went abroad two years before Sir Thomas was born; and that at his return to Scotland around the year 1561, he found the future feudalist of the age of twenty-two. This superintendence, therefore, must have taken place after the elder Craig had found a haven from his misfortunes in his native country—when the master, from his knowledge not only of the ancient but modern languages, which he acquired abroad, was well qualified to watch over the education of one destined to a learned profession—and when the pupil had himself reached that age of advanced youth, which rendered him more able to appreciate the great talents of his instructor.”⁵

History is silent as to where the future Reformer Craig and his mother resided during his early and formative years. Part of his boyhood may well have been spent at Craigston, while on the other hand, he may have been

¹ *First Statistical Account of Scotland*, Vol. 12, p. 327, Aberdeen.

² *op. cit.*, p. 435.

³ *R.M.S.*, IV, No. 2552.

⁴ *D. Thomae Cragii Vita*, J. Baillie, Ap. Jus Feudale, (Edinburgh, 1732), p. 16.

⁵ *op. cit.*, p. 28.

reared under the care of relatives within the rapidly growing city of Edinburgh. The municipal records of the Capital during this time bear the names of several notable citizens in trades and professions called Craig.¹ Certain authorities affirm that the Reformer's father had resided in Lothian prior to his untimely death. The fact that the family's Craighfintry lands had changed ownership on several occasions during the sixteenth century is worthy of note. This may well have arisen simply through local vicissitudes, yet it could equally have been brought about by some of the Craigs through economic necessity, leaving the north to seek a better livelihood elsewhere. John Craig and Sir Thomas were certainly men of ambitious character, and there were probably other members gifted with similar progressive ideas. His primary schooling at an end, John Craig passed on to further his education at the University of St Andrews, says Spottiswoode.² Following the custom of the times, he probably matriculated there around the age of thirteen or fourteen, by no means a junior compared with other students who would be there. At Oxford University for example, between 1567 and 1579, students were enrolled, one at eight-years-old, two at nine, eleven at ten, nine at eleven, forty at twelve, fifty-six at thirteen, and one hundred and fifteen at fourteen years.³ Spottiswoode writes that "After he (Craig) had gained an entrance in letters, and passed his cause in philosophy in St Andrews, he went to England . . ."⁴ Thus with the minimum of brevity are summed up Craig's four years or so of study. That he was a graduate in Arts of the University is beyond any question of doubt. In the contemporary documents of the second half of the sixteenth century, Edinburgh Burgh Records, General Assembly Minutes, State Papers, Register of the Privy Council of Scotland, and even in the writings of his Papist enemies, he is invariably referred to as "Maister John Craig", the style of the time used when referring to a graduate in Arts. Yet no university records exist to prove that Craig ever was a student at St Andrews. The reason for this regrettable fact is not hard to find. The Records of the University, in particular during the early part of sixteenth century Scotland, were anything but well kept, and a considerable number were completely lost through the carelessness or incompetence of some of the clerks and registrars.⁵ For example, the matriculation roll of students for 1526 is wholly missing, no trace of it having ever been found. If then we remember that Craig was born around the year 1512, and that he would probably proceed to St Andrews at the age of fourteen or so, his name in all likelihood would appear on the missing

¹ Edinburgh Burgh Records.

² *op. cit.*, Vol. 3, p. 91.

³ *Register of the University of Oxford*, ed. A. Clark, 1887, Vol. II, pt. 2, p. 461.

⁴ *op. cit.*, p. 91. Note: See *Church and Ministry*, G. D. Henderson, p. 158.

⁵ *Early Records, University of St Andrews*, J. Anderson, p. 28 (Introduction).

matriculation roll. Even the laureation rolls for this given period of the University's history are in parts most defective, and for the same reasons as already stated. It is reasonably certain, then, that John Craig engaged in the study of philosophy at St Andrews, and while no primary historical sources remain extant to indicate what happened to him there, these years saw a spread of Protestantism in and around St Andrews while Craig himself may have witnessed the burning of Patrick Hamilton and Henry Forrest. Certainly the intellectual atmosphere when John Craig was a student of the University was that of tension, receptivity for new ideas, and sustained heart-searching. From the line that he subsequently took, it is clear that he was early impressed, though there were many years to elapse before his complete break with Rome.

Craig would probably leave the University about 1530, after having graduated ("with applause", says Wodrow) some time before.¹ We do not know what course of action Craig pursued between the years 1530-1532. In an article in the *Edinburgh Christian Instructor* (1811) the Reverend James Scott stated that Craig's "near relatives had intended him for the service of the Church". But this would simply appear to be a judgment based on his subsequent career. Spottiswoode makes no mention of the fact. However, he has it on record that around the year, 1532, Craig was located in northern parts of England, as private tutor to the children of Lord Dacre, English Warden of the North.² There is a reference to the fact "that Dacre's Horse (troop) played havoc (with the Scottish Army at Flodden) on that fatal day".³ There is every reason to believe that in Dacre, Craig's patron, the latter found a firm and helpful friend. The Dacres were a staunch Catholic House, and continued as such long after the Reformation had been established in Scotland and England. In 1583 the then Lord Dacre and the unruly Earl of Westmorland wrote from Tournai to Cardinal William Allen who championed English Catholicism:

"Next unto God, of all our nation we do repose a most special trust . . . in you We hereby have wholly resigned and committed ourselves to be ordered by you".⁴

During 1534, Craig returned to Scotland, "because of wars arising between the two lands".⁵ It seems that since Dacre was commander of English soldiers in the affected areas, Craig's stay as tutor was rendered untenable. However he was constrained on returning home to join as novice,

¹ *Wodrow Selections*, J. Lippe, p. 1.

² *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 91 *et seq.*

³ *John Craig*, Alec Walker, LL.D. (privately printed 1889), p. 4.

⁴ *Collected Essays & Reviews*, T. G. Law, p. 196.

⁵ Spottiswoode, *supra*.

the Order of Dominicans or Black Friars in their priory at St Andrews.¹ This step was momentous for Craig in that it linked him for ever afterwards with ecclesiastical interests. His impatience with the conservative pattern of things in the Catholic Church may be discerned in the decision. The Dominicans of the period were in a reforming mood, certainly so were members in their Scottish houses. There are instances in Bishop Lesley's "*History*", of Dominican friars being examined by church courts on charges of heresy. Craig may well have been one of this anonymous company, for he quickly incurred the displeasure of ecclesiastical superiors. We may take it as assured that what criticisms he had to level were not mainly given behind closed doors. The vehemence of authority's reaction suggests that he was proving a stumbling block to the faithful because of his unorthodox preaching. So Spottiswoode affirms. Craig "had not been long among them (the Dominicans) when, upon suspicion of heresy, he was put in prison". Thus at the comparatively early age of twenty-three or thereabouts, he had his first considerable clash with the Catholic Church and in particular his priestly superiors. It is nowhere indicated how lengthy was the period under duress, but comparing such statements as "he had not been long among them" and "being cleared of that imputation, he went back again to England", it would appear that he was in custody and examination for several months. Free once more, and doubtless somewhat shaken by the alarming experience, if not subdued also, and also still feeling far from secured from the attentions of consistorial courts, Craig once more crossed over the Border. He made his reappearance at the house of his former employer and benefactor, Lord Dacre. He hoped to obtain through his good offices a teaching post at the University of Cambridge. But in this Craig suffered disappointment, for if his native land proved a place of danger for him, the England of that particular year, 1536, was very much more so. As it also happened, Dacre's power and influence had waned considerably; for he was no longer in favour at court since his trial before his peers during July 1534. He had been accused of high treason; of having as Warden of the North given occasion for recent Border fighting. Although he had been acquitted, he was still not in favour in high places, so Craig could not have chosen a worse time to seek his patronage. More than disappointed Craig set his course for the Continent. Wodrow says in a note that Craig "received a reasonable offer to accompany, as travelling tutor, some English gentlemen going abroad to improve their education".²

There probably was a deeper reason, and one closer to the truth, for Craig's sudden departure from English soil, this being the dangerous

¹ *ibid.*

² *Selections from Wodrow*, J. Lippe, p. 2.

religious state of that nation during 1536. Thus Bishop Lesley:

“Because the King of England had repudiated his wife, Queen Catherine, and renounced and abrogated the Pope’s authority within his realm, and taken upon himself the supremacy, calling himself the supreme head of the Church of England, and because different religious men preached and spoke against the same, he put several of them to death; others he put in prison and at last banished all friars forth of his realm, and some of them were received in Scotland.”¹

Kirkwood Hewat maintains that Craig, on receiving no preferment in England, returned once more to Scotland:

“But like several others he was so dissatisfied with the ignorance and intolerance of the clergy, that in the following year he left his native land for France, whence he proceeded to Italy”.²

Craig certainly proceeded to Italy, but there is no evidence to support this statement in preference to Spottiswoode’s. As it was, Craig had no need to learn further Catholic Church decline in Scotland; for it was because of priestly ignorance and intolerance that he had left for England during 1536.

Craig would arrive in Rome towards the end of that year or early in the following. It is obvious that he was in possession of letters of introduction from his benefactor Lord Dacre, who was well-known to Reginald, Cardinal Pole, and in sympathy with him for the stand he had taken against Henry VIII in the matter of the royal divorce. Pole had incurred the relentless enmity of the King through his published work, *De Unitate Ecclesiastica*. Craig was able to gain an audience with the Cardinal, who had become popular and influential at the Curia. He was himself of the Order of Carthusians, and became immediately attracted to this young and promising Scottish Dominican friar. Pole doubtless questioned him well and he seems to have felt a certain amount of sympathy for Craig’s plight. The Cardinal himself was credited with having liberal principles in Church matters, and at times he was accused by his enemies of not being a true papist. There is a modern touch about this cleric of whom it is recorded that “He held moderate opinions upon many points of controversy between the Churches”.³ Hewat notes justly that:

“There must have been something arresting about this young monk (Craig), for it was on the recommendation of one so great and influential as Cardinal Pole that he was admitted to a place among the

¹ *History of Scotland*, J. Lesley, p. 150.

² *Makers of the Scottish Kirk*, Hewat, p. 351.

³ *Collected Essays & Reviews*, T. G. Law, p. 280.

Dominicans in the city of Bologna, where he soon became master of the Novices".¹

Pole was himself but a young man of thirty-six at the time, and he also had been under a cloud like Craig for expressing too freely daring opinions.

Notwithstanding his forthrightness, Craig's native ability had brought him to the forefront at a comparatively early age. As the trusted junior of his superiors at the priory, he was sent sometimes far afield on missions on their behalf, of which Spottiswoode gives the following:

"Afterwards when they perceived his diligence and dexterity in businesses, he was employed in all their affairs throughout Italy, and sent on commission to Chios, an isle situated in the Ionic Sea, to redress things that were amiss amongst those of their order".²

Thus, even at this date, qualities were coming to the fore that were to be the distinguishing marks of Craig the Reformer: scholarship, man of affairs, disciplinarian. Advancing over these years in learning and influence, he at length was appointed Rector of the Dominican College at Bologna, which had a connection with the University, which during this period was a flourishing centre of Catholic learning. Besides having under his supervision young men intended for the priesthood, he also tutored sons of noblemen and the like, sent there to complete their education.

As is the case with John Knox, there are some twenty-three years of which we know only the minimum of details concerning Craig, and not even from contemporary written documents. The time being 1522-1545.³

It is surely a matter for regret that we know so little of Knox's formative years. Hume Brown points out that he probably regarded the time as of little account, which he had good reason to abhor and detest. A like reticence would apply also to Craig. There is evidence that he talked of these matters to his friends, but only in a summary kind of way and it was an opponent of Craig who mentions the fact. There are therefore, of Craig's work within the pre-Reformation Church, but fleeting glimpses. But rarely is there a note about him in the company of his students, and we, on his own testimony, learn of him playing a roll in a Bolognian conference. This took place in the Blackfriars' Priory, 1554, and holding forth were two medieval exponents of Canon Law, Thomas de Finola and Vincent de Placentia. This was on one of the hotly debated issues of the times, the relation between princes and subjects. Craig was to engage more intimately on this theme, on his return

¹ *op. cit.*, p. 351.

² *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 91-93.

³ *John Knox*, Hume Brown, Vol. I, p. 31.

to Scotland. This happened at a conference in Edinburgh during 1564, the principal opponents in argument being Knox and Maitland of Lethington, the subject being the extent and validity of royal claims over subjects.¹

It is highly probable that Craig was resident in Bologna during 1547 when the Council of Trent came to that city and duly held its second session in the Archbishop's Palace. The reason for this move was that Bologna was becoming a hot-bed of heresy. John Mollio in his lectures there was venturing unorthodox teaching on theology, for which he was summoned to Rome. He was ordered to cease his expositions of St Paul's Letters. Continuing recalcitrant, the Archbishop of Bologna had him removed from his chair at the University.³ We learn of Bucer who, in 1541, congratulated the Protestants of Bologna on their progress, and a few years later they could boast of being able to raise an army of 6,000 to oppose the Pope.² All this reveals somewhat the intellectual ferment that went on, but there is nothing to show that Craig was in any way implicated. He may well have been considerably impressed.

About the year 1558 or possibly even earlier, John Craig, while engaged on work in the library of the Inquisition in Bologna, had his attention drawn to a copy of Calvin's *Christianae Religionis Institutio* first published in Basel, 1536. Gripped by its teaching the more he read and pondered, Craig apparently was gradually led to accept this powerful and fresh study of the works of St Augustine. Here, surely, were the religion and theology of the early Church! Such thoughts as these must have taken possession of his mind until it became convinced of their certainty. The sincerity of the change in his religious thinking may be gauged by the fact that he was emboldened to share his new convictions with a fellow-Dominican. This priest was much older than Craig, and the latter was delighted to learn that he also had been constrained to believe Reformation truths from a reading of Calvin's works. Craig however was advised by his friend to go circumspectly in the matter as they were both treading on dangerous ground. According to Spottiswoode, Craig failed to take the warning, and began to vent rather freely his criticisms of the Roman Church and its doctrines. He was quickly apprehended by his superiors, delated for heresy, and since he had been prominent in Church affairs, was conveyed to Rome, where, after due examination and trial at the hands of the Inquisition, he was found guilty of the charges preferred against him, excommunicated, and condemned to be burnt at the stake.⁴

¹ *Knox's Works*, Dickenson, Vol. II, p. 131 f.

² *Op. cit.*, Law, p. 281.

³ *Reformation in Italy*, T. M'Crie, pp. 79 and 83.

⁴ Spottiswoode, Vol. III, pp. 91-93.

There is another version of these events which is given by John Row whose father had served the Catholic Church in Italy around the same period as Craig, and who later became one of his Reformer colleagues. According to this account, the elderly friar to whom Craig confided warned him to caution above all things, saying that if he had decided to accept the teaching of Calvin, he had better with all speed make his way to a more tolerant country.¹ Craig complied with this advice to the extent of procuring his discharge from the priory. He did not however proceed far from Bologna, as he was able to obtain a place of refuge and of service in the family of a neighbouring nobleman who had embraced Reformation principles.² Some time afterwards as Craig and his young pupils, the nobleman's children were walking and conversing in a little wood or park near the castle, to which they in fine weather were accustomed to go for prayer and study, they came across a badly wounded soldier who had been attacked by thieves. Craig assumed responsibility for him, restored him to vigour and sent him on his way provided for, in a manner reminiscent of the Good Samaritan parable. A more embellished account says that the soldier had been wounded in a skirmish, and there are lurid details of his injuries. Whatever the facts, Craig seems to have been of help to a wretched unfortunate and this, according both to Spottiswoode and Row, was to provide a happy sequel for himself when he got into serious trouble. Craig's peaceful days in this "secret place" with "his young students and their books", soon came to an end. His retreat was discovered by his church enemies, who were now resolved to make an end of him. He was apprehended together with his nobleman friend and, being charged with being heretics, they were taken to the Inquisition authorities at Rome where they were consigned to a wretched prison. Row adds that, up till then, Craig had "continued a considerable while teaching the Reformed Religion".³ Although this statement occurs in the embellished account, it does fit in with Craig being condemned to be burnt as a heretic. Like Hus, Hamilton and Wishart, Craig had for long been a critic of the Papacy and so had become a marked man.

Craig was kept imprisoned for upwards of nine months. Row's *Coronis* is shown to over-step geography in stating that he was confined within "a base prison or pit, into which the River Tiber flowed at every tide, so that the prisoners stood in water sometimes almost to their middle". This has been rebutted on the grounds that the Mediterranean is practically tideless. However, as devastating floods are not uncommon in Italy, the situation described was far from impossible.

¹ *History of the Church of Scotland*, Row (also *Coronis & Additions to Coronis*), p. 415, and pp. 457-461.

² K. Hewat, *Makers of the Scottish Kirk*, p. 353.

³ *op. cit.*, p. 452.

Dr Law in his *Collected Essays and Reviews*, says that:

“With Paul IV who then occupied the papal chair, Craig seemed to have small chance of escape. The chief interests of this rigorous and austere pontiff centred in the Inquisition, which he had been the means of restoring. He was busy during his pontificate (1555-1559) with enlarging its jurisdiction and in legislation for its action, and in his zeal against heretics he authorised the application of torture for the detection of their accomplices. In his dying moments he commended his favourite institution to the care of his cardinals”.¹

He died during August, and when they learned of the event, Craig and the other prisoners gave praise to God, says Row. Rome’s populace hailed the death of the Pope by dashing down his statue and rioted throughout the city. They dragged the statue for three days through Rome and finally dumped it into the Tiber. Some of the rioters broke into prisons, roughly handling some of the Inquisition officers, and setting their headquarters on fire. Among the prisoners set at liberty was Craig. His deliverance came none too soon, says Spottiswoode. Paul IV died on the 18th and Craig was to have been consigned to the flames the very next day. Regaining so dramatically his liberty, he beat a hasty retreat from Rome. But he and his fellow-escapees first sought temporary refuge in a secluded hostelry on the outskirts. Order having been quickly restored in Rome, a commission from the Inquisition was at once dispatched in pursuit of the heretics and its officers and men came up with them, though at first unaware of the fact, in the place where Craig and the others were hiding. Spottiswoode’s version differs from that of Row and tells how Craig really fell into the hands of brigands, “loose men”, he terms them. At the inn they demanded food and Craig was filled with fear lest he should be recognised and recaptured. Their leader observed him closely and Craig began to feel that he had been discovered. Then the strange providence occurred. Their officer called him aside and enquired if at such and such a time and place near Bologna he had ever found a naked, wounded man and had readily and generously come to his aid. It may have been due to present stress, but Craig at first had difficulty in recalling the circumstance. “Then I do”, replied the other; “I’m the man, and your kind and humane liberality to me then the Lord calls me to requite now.” He helped Craig on his way and according to Row, “showed him the safest course to Bologna”. He hastened there with all possible speed in the hope that he would find a suitable place of safety. Says Spottiswoode:

“He trusted to find some kindness among his acquaintances there, but

¹ *op. cit.*, p. 281.

on coming they eyed him with suspicion, and fearing more trouble he slipped away secretly and made tracks for Milan.”

We possess only secondary sources for this portion of Craig's career. Those of Row and Spottiswoode, who in the main tell a like story, though they differ in points of detail. Row gives two accounts of his meeting with brigands or soldiers, the second being more fulsome. He does not mention in either, Craig's return to Bologna. Row indicates that a considerable time had elapsed between Craig's acceptance of Calvinism and his arrest for heresy. M'Crie in his life of Knox adopts this version noting that Craig had obtained his discharge from the priory at Bologna.¹ Dr T. G. Law has written that:

“It would be interesting, if from original documents at Bologna or Rome, the facts of the case, and the character of Craig's convictions at the time, could be ascertained with certainty. But there can be little doubt that at Vienna (which he reached eventually) he preached as a Dominican friar.”²

It is reasonable to suppose that Row, the historian's father, and Craig would meet when in Italy. Row primus was himself a graduate of St Andrews and some fourteen years younger, and had been engaged over a lengthy period in study at Padua, forty miles north of Bologna, where he graduated Doctor of Laws in 1557. Row sojourned in Italy for eight years, being mostly resident at Rome, 1550-1558.³

Several weeks after his escape from Rome, Craig was again in great straits through lack of resources. He had exhausted money which the soldier had given him. His route north was arduous, for he had been forced to travel slowly in keeping to minor roads to lessen chances of discovery. Row says he had been given a horse, but this he had to abandon or sell. Now occurred what was probably the most colourful happening in his eventful career, the truth of which has been challenged. Spottiswoode wrote:

“I should scarce relate (the incident), so incredible it seems, if to many of good place he himself had not often repeated it as a singular testimony of God's care of him.”

The Archbishop's version tells how Craig had travelled for several days along tracks but little frequented and on reaching a forest among wild and desolate country, Craig being footsore and weary, lay down among the shelter of bushes, near to which flowed a small stream. As he sought what refreshment he could in rest, he lay there in apprehension, for he had quite

¹ *Knox*, T. M'Crie, p. 238.

² *op. cit.*, p. 283.

³ Hewat, *Makers of the Scottish Kirk*, p. 227.

lost his way. It was then that a stray dog came fawning up to him; it had a purse between its teeth, laying it down at Craig's feet. He rose up greatly afraid, for he imagined that there must be people thereabouts. But finding that there was no one, he picked up the purse which he found to contain money, and construing this in great thankfulness, to proceed from God's providence, Craig pursued his way with renewed hope till he reached a small village. He had intended to make his way into France, but meeting in with friendly travellers proceeding to Vienna he went in their company thither.

This remarkable, though by no means incredible tale, is repeated by Row with additional details and, says Law, with "signs of legendary growth".¹ According to Row:

"As Craig journeyed through a country town, fawning upon him as if he were his master. He chased the dog away from him, fearing that he should have been challenged for stealing so pretty a dog who would not be chased away, but followed him a space out of town At last Mr Craig began to make of the dog, and was content, seeing he would not go back, to take him to bear him company on his travels, and so the dog followed him for some days, and waited carefully on him as master.

It was not till later in his flight when Craig, overcome with heat and fatigue, had begun to pray that the dog with his paw scraped on his shoulder. The animal persisted and Craig saw that it carried a purse in its mouth. It was full of gold coins and, to quote Row again:

"Craig being then well provided by this which he called his viaticum (travel-money), after some stay in France, he comes home to Scotland, and brought with him to Edinburgh, the dog, the purse, and some of the gold."²

Row concludes his narrative thus:

"Though it may seem fabulous to some, I know it to be as certain as any human thing can be, for the wife of this worthy servant of Jesus Christ, living in Edinburgh (where he was one of the town ministers, and very honest, straight and famous in his time), survived her husband for many years, until the year 1630, did often relate this history, with all the passages of it, to me and many others. She was an honest woman, fide digna, well-known in Edinburgh under the name of Dame Craig."

¹ *op. cit.*, T. G. Law, p. 283.

² *op. cit.*, pp. 452-461.

Craig himself frequently referred to this adventure. "He often repeated it to many in good standing", are Spottiswoode's words. Catholic opponents knew of it and repeated that it only proved that he had been in league with the Devil! But long before John Hamilton, able Catholic apologist questioned the story's authenticity in his *Facile Tractise* (1600) it was alluded to in the satirical verse of Nicol Burne. He had functioned as a professor of Philosophy at St Andrews but had gone back to Catholicism during 1579. Burne had been dealt with by John Craig through the General Assembly over his lapse and this Burne did not lightly forgive or forget. Banished to France, he published in the Scottish vernacular his *Disputation concerning the heads of Religion* In it occurs the satirical verses called "An admonition to the antichristian ministers in the 'deformit' Kirk of Scotland". It ridicules the prominent Reformers making mention several times of Craig.

"Practices and prophecies of Necromancy
Craig that apostate, has in tuition (hand)."

Burne hits at him as a practiser of the "black arts". Dr Cranstoun, editor of the *Satirical Poems of the Reformation*, was convinced that this reference to Craig hints broadly at the miraculous story of the dog and the purse of gold.¹

Hamilton to whom reference has been made, was a brave, clever but unprincipled opponent of the Scottish Reformers.² In his *Facile Tractise* he says:

"We have a notable example of Friar John Craig who cast his cowl, and went through a forest in Italy, as he himself boasted in sundry companies, because a black dog gave to him by the way a purse of gold. The colour of the dog may declare whether it was sent by a good spirit or not; for the Holy Spirit descended upon Christ in the likeness of a white dove. For this apostacy, this unfrocked friar was made an apostle of this fifth Gospel in Edinburgh . . ."

In sneering at Craig, Hamilton furnished gratuitously corroborative facts about him. This direct reference to his adventures, show that these were already well-known to friend and foe alike, and that by neither were they held in doubt. It is of interest to note that Hamilton's references have more in common with Row's account than Spottiswoode's. We may take it then as very likely that Craig did sever his connection with the Dominicans of Bologna previous to being arraigned for heresy.

Towards the close of 1559, Craig crossed into Austria, his troubles for the present over, and on reaching Vienna he was able to gain access to the

¹ *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 44 (Introduction).

² *Facile Tractise*, J. Hamilton, p. 438.

royal court, being given a favourable reception from the Archduke Maximilian. Spottiswoode names him emperor, but though at this time he shared with his father Ferdinand responsibility of government, it was the latter who occupied the throne. Indeed, because of his Lutheran sympathies, Maximilian, when the throne fell vacant, had considerable difficulty in being accepted as emperor. Sir James Melville says in his *Memoirs* concerning a diplomatic mission he undertook to Austria during 1562, that "Maximilian was chosen lately King of the Romans not without difficulty. Ferdinand (his father) had been a devout Catholic . . . but Maximilian seemed to be a zealous protestant".¹ In fact Pope Paul IV in 1558 had hesitated to recognise Ferdinand as emperor, and severely blamed him for being the cause of his son's alienation from the Catholic faith by giving him a heretical education.² The reproaches of the Pope gave a fresh stimulus to royal opposition to Rome, so that when Craig was brought to their attention, the archduke gave him welcome. Spottiswoode notes that Craig "professed there as a Dominican and preached before Maximilian, who, liking him and his teaching, would have detained him". But Craig was to have no respite from his enemies; for the new Pope, Pius IV, learning of his whereabouts, wrote Maximilian with the demand that Craig be returned to Rome since he was under the condemnation of the Church. Knowing what the fate of this heretic would be, yet not wishing to give greater offence to the Church than necessary, Maximilian compromised by sending Craig homewards with letters of safe conduct. He hastened from Vienna, and travelling through Germany and France, reached England probably in the summer of 1560.

Now in England, a friendlier land than he had known it in 1536, Craig learned that the Reformation in Religion had begun in Scotland in earnest. It is highly likely that over the previous twenty years, he had by means of correspondence been kept informed of affairs in his native land. There were numerous Scotsmen sojourning like himself in Italy through these times from whom he would be able to glean information. John Willock, one of those leading the Scottish Reformation movement was in London during the summer of 1560. He had been sent with others by Reformer colleagues to seek aid from Queen Elizabeth. It is more than likely that John Craig as a prominent Scot would meet up with the ambassador, and would learn at first hand of the stirring events hourly happening north of the Border.

Like other lesser luminaries of the Scottish Reformation the documents relating to Craig's life are at best fragmentary. No first class historical material for his years spent in the Roman communion is available and it is

¹ *op. cit.*, Bannatyne Club, p. 93.

² *Collected Essays*, T. G. Law, p. 285.

doubtful whether there exists relevant documents in Italy.¹ Even without these however it is noteworthy that Craig was a sufficiently important person to discredit had his testimony been manifestly false, and the fact remains that though his ecclesiastical opponents mocked this testimony, they apparently did not doubt its basic truth.

¹ Attempts to get information from the Vatican and Bologna met with no success, while enquiries by Dr Annie Dunlop in the Vatican archives likewise drew a blank.

